

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report June 2004

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Surveillance

- Enhanced BSE surveillance effort initiated – On June 1st, APHIS initiated an effort to test as many cattle as possible in the targeted high-risk population for BSE over a 12 to 18 month period. The enhanced BSE surveillance effort is utilizing many of the approaches recommended in the Safeguarding Review. Specifically, rapid screening tests are being utilized and testing is taking place at a network of state laboratories. Tablet or hand-held computers are being utilized by sample collectors for entering and transmitting the electronic submission form. Data are being maintained on a web-based data entry system. Net conferences were utilized to provide training on identifying the target population and procedures for sample collection and submission. An extensive communications plan has been developed and is being implemented. Quality control will be ensured through a third party review of the process.
- Animal identification listening sessions – APHIS announced that the Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs will host a series of twelve listening sessions on animal identification throughout the country. These listening sessions will provide livestock producers and other stakeholders with the opportunity to offer their comments on the USDA's implementation of a National Animal Identification System. These listening sessions begin July 1st. Safeguarding Review recommendation #128 calls for the development of a comprehensive animal identification system which takes into consideration state and regional animal production methods.

Response

- Incident Command System training – The Secretary of Agriculture has mandated that all USDA employees become familiar with basic ICS concepts and structure. All APHIS employees are required to complete ICS 100 and ICS 200. These training courses have been made available on-line through a government online training source. Ensuring that APHIS personnel are familiar with basic ICS concepts and structure is consistent with Safeguarding Review recommendation #115 which calls for merging animal health emergency management with other federal emergency management efforts.
- Disease modeling – Work continued on the development and validation of foot-and-mouth disease spread models. On June 15-17th a meeting of international experts on disease modeling and FMD was held in Fort Collins. During the

meeting, the experts examined all aspects of the models. Information gleaned from the experts will be utilized to improve the models. Development of models to assist in planning for response is consistent with Safeguarding Review recommendation #130.

Laboratory Systems

- Proficiency testing for CSF and FMD – Laboratories participating in the pilot National Animal Health Laboratory Network have been proficiency tested for CSF and FMD using the real-time PCR method. These real-time PCR tests are currently being validated. Safeguarding Review recommendations 17, 74, 118, and 121 point toward the establishment of a national animal health laboratory system.

Organizational Dynamics

- National recruitment coordinator hired – VS has hired a National Recruitment Coordinator. The new coordinator will assist VS in improving recruitment and outreach activities. Safeguarding Review recommendation #65 calls for addressing critical staffing needs.
- New employee orientation web site – Materials for new employee orientation have been placed on a web site. This orientation web site will assist new employees in receiving current information and in completing required forms. Safeguarding Review recommendation #141 calls for establishing orientation programs for new APHIS employees.
- Performance plans for managers aligned with strategic plans – As mandated by the USDA Human Capital Management Plan and the USDA Office of Human Resources Management, APHIS has revised performance plans for all GS 14 and GS 15 managers. Performance plans have been amended to ensure that at least one critical performance element is: aligned with organizational goals contained in the USDA Strategic Plan and the Agency's Strategic Plan, explicitly results-oriented, and includes credible measures of performance. Results-oriented performance is consistent with organizational improvements recommended in the Safeguarding Review.

Information Technology

- Science and technology forum – The APHIS Coordinating Office on Technology, Information, and Assessment (COTIA) sponsored a science and technology forum in Ames Iowa June 22-23rd. The forum brought together 42 people from across APHIS, ARS, Iowa State University, and private contractors. Forum participants explored opportunities for collaborative efforts to increase the use of new technologies. The COTIA Board of Directors (representing all of the APHIS technology units) met in Ames after the forum and developed strategic plans for

COTIA for the remainder of 2004. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encourage the use of new technologies (#s 3, 64, and 77).

II. Implementation activities:

Eleven Action Plans were presented to the VS Management Team in June. Ten of the plans received management team approval. Implementation of these action plans will begin as funds allow. The approved action plans will be posted on the VS safeguarding web page.

The Exclusion Issue Group held a conference call on June 15th to discuss priorities. A face-to-face meeting is planned for the week of August 16th. The group continues to work on several data gathering initiatives and will be providing feedback to International Services on the exclusion related activities in its Strategic Plan.

The Laboratory Systems Issue Group met the week of June 21st and drafted four action plans.

The Veterinary Accreditation Safeguarding Issue Group has completed its work.

Comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Carol Tuszynski at Area Code (970) 494-7320.

